

**DEROGATORY STRATEGY AS DISCURSIVE MOVE REFLECTED  
IN *THE BAD GUYS* MOVIE**

**THESIS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
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**DEROGATORY STRATEGY AS DISCURSIVE MOVE REFLECTED IN *THE BAD***

**GUYS MOVIE**

**THESIS**

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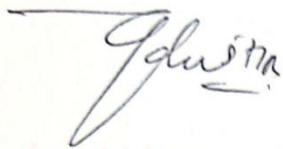
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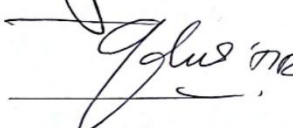

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## **MOTTO**

*"Embrace each moment, chase your dreams, and let your heart leads the way to greatness."*

## **DEDICATION**

*This thesis is dedicated to my beloved mom who always show me the greatest love I ever get, and also to all my family sister and brother who always giving me a power to step up. Lastly for all of lecturers and my colleagues who keep supporting me through hard time.*

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## ABSTRACT

**Hartono, Arrafi Nur Fadhillah** (2025) Derogatory Strategy as Discursive Move Reflected in The Bad Guys Movie. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Dr. Hj. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M.Pd., M.Ed.

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This study explores the use of derogatory language in the animated film *The Bad Guys* (2022) to examine how discourse shapes character identity and reflects societal labeling. Employing a qualitative approach, the research applies van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of discursive strategies and Zollner's functional framework of derogation to analyze selected utterances from the film. Findings indicate that derogatory expressions, such as "Big Bad Wolf" and "trash," serve not merely as comic devices but as tools of identity construction and social commentary. The film's characters often internalize societal labels, demonstrating how language contributes to both marginalization and personal struggle for redefinition. Key discursive strategies observed include actor description, implication, metaphor, and polarization, while derogatory functions range from expressing anger and criticism to ridicule and resignation. Unlike prior studies that focus on political discourse, this research highlights how even family-oriented media subtly reinforce ideological narratives. By uncovering how derogation operates within fictional narratives, the study underscores the broader role of media in shaping perceptions of morality, deviance, and redemption. It calls for increased critical engagement with language in animated content, recognizing its power in normalizing or challenging social stereotypes, especially for younger audiences.

## ABSTRAK

**Hartono, Arrafi Nur Fadhillah. (2025).** Strategi Derogasi sebagai Gerak Diskursif yang Tercermin dalam Film *The Bad Guys*. Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dosen Pembimbing: Dr. Hj. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M.Pd., M.Ed.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Derogasi, gerak diskursif, film *The Bad Guys*.

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Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi penggunaan bahasa derogatif dalam film animasi *The Bad Guys* (2022) untuk mengkaji bagaimana wacana membentuk identitas karakter dan mencerminkan pelabelan sosial. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menerapkan model sosio-kognitif strategi diskursif dari van Dijk serta kerangka fungsional derogasi dari Zollner untuk menganalisis ujaran-ujaran terpilih dalam film tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ekspresi-ekspresi derogatif seperti "Serigala Jahat Besar" (*Big Bad Wolf*) dan "sampah" tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai perangkat komedi, tetapi juga sebagai alat konstruksi identitas dan komentar sosial. Karakter-karakter dalam film seringkali menginternalisasi label sosial, yang menunjukkan bagaimana bahasa turut berkontribusi terhadap marginalisasi serta perjuangan individu dalam mendefinisikan ulang dirinya. Strategi diskursif utama yang diamati mencakup deskripsi aktor, implikasi, metafora, dan polarisasi; sementara fungsi-fungsi derogatif meliputi ekspresi kemarahan, kritik, ejekan, hingga rasa putus asa. Berbeda dari penelitian sebelumnya yang lebih banyak berfokus pada wacana politik, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana media ramah keluarga pun dapat secara halus memperkuat narasi ideologis. Dengan mengungkap bagaimana strategi derogasi beroperasi dalam narasi fiksi, studi ini menegaskan peran media dalam membentuk persepsi tentang moralitas, penyimpangan, dan penebusan. Penelitian ini menyerukan keterlibatan kritis terhadap bahasa dalam konten animasi, dengan menyadari kekuatannya dalam menormalisasi atau menantang stereotip sosial, khususnya bagi penonton muda.

## صخلملا

"هارتونو، عرافي نور فضيلة. (2025). استراتيجية الإزدراء كحركة خطابية تتعكس في فيلم "الأشرار رسالة جامعية لنيل درجة البكالوريوس. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية مالانج.

المشرفة: الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية الإزدراء، الحركة الخطابية، فيلم الأشرار

تستكشف هذه الدراسة استخدام اللغة الانتقاصية في فيلم الرسوم المتحركة الأشرار ٢٠٢٢ لفهم كيف تُشكّل الخطابيات هوية الشخصيات وتُعبّر عن التصنيفات الاجتماعية. من خلال منهج نوعي، تطبق هذه الدراسة النموذج السوسيو-معرفي لاستراتيجيات الخطاب لـ فان دايك، إلى جانب الإطار الوظيفي للإزدراء لـ زولنر "لتحليل العبارات المختارة من الفيلم. تشير النتائج إلى أن العبارات الانتقاصية مثل "الذنب الشرير الكبير و"القمامة" لا تُستخدم فقط لأغراض فكاهية، بل تؤدي دورًا في بناء الهوية والتعليق على الواقع الاجتماعي. غالبًا ما يُظهر أبطال الفيلم تبنيهم للتصنيفات الاجتماعية، مما يُبرز كيف تسهم اللغة في التهميش والنضال من أجل إعادة تعريف الذات. من بين الاستراتيجيات الخطابية الملحوظة: وصف الفاعل، والتلميح، والاستعارة والاستقطاب، بينما تتراوح الوظائف الانتقاصية بين التعبير عن الغضب والنقد، والسخرية، وحتى الاستسلام وعلى عكس الدراسات السابقة التي ركّزت على الخطاب السياسي، تُسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على كيف يمكن للإعلام المُوجّه للعائلة أن يعزز الرسائل الأيديولوجية بطريقة غير مباشرة. من خلال الكشف عن كيفية عمل الإزدراء داخل السرد الخيالي، تؤكد الدراسة الدور الأوسع للإعلام في تشكيل تصورات الجمهور حول الأخلاق، والانحراف، والخلاص. وتدعو الدراسة إلى التفاعل النقدي مع اللغة في محتوى الرسوم المتحركة إدراكًا لقوتها في تطبيع أو تحدي الصور النمطية الاجتماعية، خاصةً لدى الجماهير الشابة.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter contains the background of the study, which is the research subject and previous study. Furthermore, it also will include with the research question, significance, scope, and limits are all described in detail. Last but not least, Definition of key terms is to provide readers with a general idea of the terminology they must comprehend.

#### **A. Background of the study**

In this modern world, people can easily express their feelings with only the tip of their finger. Nowadays it is common for people seeking others' mistakes without concerning the use of appropriate language. The use of derogatory language frequently operates as a discursive mechanism through which individuals and groups assert dominance or establish superiority over others. Rather than being a mere expression of emotion, such language functions ideologically to maintain and reinforce social hierarchies. As van Dijk (1998) argues, derogatory discourse is a central strategy in sustaining group-based inequalities, wherein speakers frame themselves positively while casting others in a negative light. This strategic use of language facilitates the marginalization of outgroups and the consolidation of ingroup power.

Derogatory language plays a pivotal role in maintaining the dominance of powerful groups by legitimizing exclusionary practices and normalizing social inequalities. Through discursive strategies such as positive self-presentation and negative other-

presentation, language becomes a tool for ideological manipulation (van Dijk, 2006). This dual strategy not only elevates the speaker's ingroup but simultaneously delegitimizes and stigmatizes the outgroup, thereby reinforcing hierarchical distinctions. As Wodak and Meyer (2009) explain, such discursive practices serve to naturalize dominance and justify discriminatory actions by embedding them within everyday communication. Moreover, Fairclough (2013) underscores that linguistic choices in discourse are never neutral they reflect and reproduce existing power relations within society.

In contemporary society, language holds the power to shape not only how individuals perceive others, but also how they understand themselves. In particular, derogatory expressions have become a prevalent feature in everyday communication, often used to exclude, ridicule, or devalue certain social groups. These forms of language are not confined to personal interactions; they also appear widely in digital spaces, news media, and entertainment. In films and animated productions, derogatory language is sometimes disguised as humor or sarcasm, yet it can subtly reinforce harmful stereotypes or societal labels. What is often presented as casual banter or comic relief may in fact carry deeper implications about how society views criminality, morality, or social deviance.

The portrayal of characters as "bad" or "unredeemable" in films reflects real-world challenges faced by individuals who are stigmatized or labeled due to their appearance, background, or past behavior. Characters who internalize these labels may begin to see themselves as society sees them, which can lead to a cycle of exclusion and resignation.



This dynamic is especially visible in films that center around redemption arcs, where characters attempt to redefine themselves despite being judged harshly by others. The struggle between how one is perceived and how one wants to be seen is central to many narratives, making films a valuable medium for exploring social issues like marginalization, stereotyping, and identity negotiation.

This study focuses on *The Bad Guys*, an animated film that goes beyond its comedic storyline to explore deeper messages about social labeling and the difficulty of breaking free from societal expectations. Although presented as family entertainment, the film contains nuanced depictions of characters who are judged by their reputations rather than their actions. By examining the language used in the film, this research seeks to uncover how derogatory expressions reflect the characters' internal struggles and the broader societal forces that shape their identities. In doing so, the study aims to highlight the role of media in both reflecting and reinforcing the social realities that many individuals face in everyday life.

*The Bad Guys* (2022), directed by Pierre Perifel and produced by DreamWorks, centers on a group of criminal animals striving to reinvent themselves for a fresh start. Despite its comedic tone, the film is densely packed with derogatory expressions—ranging from insults (“Big Bad Wolf,” “sucker,” “walking garbage”) to belittling remarks like “good-for-nothing” and “monster,” as catalogued in a parents’ guide detailing over a dozen such terms (kids-in-mind.com). This language does more than serve as humor; it reinforces stereotypes by framing characters according to society's expectations. A

review on Plugged In highlights how the film explores the conflict between predetermined labels ("villains") and characters' capacity for change, illustrating that "most people... subscribe to the nature side of the debate, leading to the Bad Guys being stereotyped as villains" (pluggedin.com).

By using these derogatory labels, the film reflects real-world dynamics: language can both define and constrain identity. Characters internalize these labels one repeatedly introduces himself as the "Big Bad Wolf" demonstrating how stigmatizing language shapes self-perception. A critical discourse analysis of *The Bad Guys* thus reveals how filmic dialogue can mirror and reinforce ideological assumptions, making seemingly playful insults serve as markers of power, belonging, and exclusion.

By examining the language used in *The Bad Guys*, it becomes clear that identity is not merely presented as an innate characteristic, but rather as something socially constructed through discourse. Characters like Wolf, Snake, and Shark are repeatedly labeled using derogatory terms such as "villain," "monster," or "criminal," often before their actions are judged on their own merit. These labels are not neutral; they carry the weight of social expectations and historical associations tied to their animal species and supposed roles in society. For instance, Wolf's repeated identification as the "Big Bad Wolf" ties directly into fairy tale lore, invoking a pre-existing stereotype that frames him as dangerous and untrustworthy. Through these repeated associations, the film shows how language shapes not only how others see the characters but also how the characters begin to see themselves.

This aligns with the concept of identity as socially constructed where language, power, and ideology intersect to shape perception. As van Dijk (2006) and Wodak (2011) suggest in their work on Critical Discourse Analysis, discourse is central to the reproduction of social hierarchies and group-based biases. In the film, the "bad guys" internalize these societal judgments, leading to self-doubt and resistance. Yet, by drawing attention to this process, the film also opens a space for critique and transformation. It challenges the audience to question why certain groups are automatically labeled as bad and whether redemption is possible within a rigid system of social categorization. Thus, *The Bad Guys* does more than entertain it provides a lens through which we can analyze how language constructs identity and sustains or challenges social stereotypes.

In reviewing related studies, the researcher found relevant insights from Indriana and Muttaqin (2019), who examined how Donald Trump employed derogation strategies within his political discourse. Their study highlights how Trump used subtle ideological structures specifically through positive self-representation and negative other-representation to shape public opinion and consolidate power. Discursive tools such as number games, lexicalization, metaphor, and illustration were strategically employed to persuade audiences and frame opponents in a negative light. From this study, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of how discursive moves are not only linguistic techniques but also instruments of political influence.

This finding reinforces the idea that derogation can serve as a powerful rhetorical strategy to manipulate public perception, maintain dominance, and discredit opposing

groups. Applying this perspective to the current research, it becomes clear that the same linguistic mechanisms used in political contexts can also appear in media representations, including animated films like *The Bad Guys*. This connection underscores the broader applicability of derogation strategies across different genres and discourses, further justifying the relevance of Critical Discourse Analysis in unpacking them.

Similar research appears to use the same strategy, the use of words that can negate the interest of people so people feel that their ideology is the same with the speaker. Unvar, S. & Rahimi, A. (2013) concluded that in Obama's victory speech, all words used in the speech were targeted. Purposefully chosen words are designed to reflect and express the speaker's intended ideology and point of view. Furthermore, the purpose of these words is to elicit the potential impact the speaker wishes to have on the listener. It is clear from the analysis of the words used in the speech that these words are not used haphazardly. Your goal is to have an impact on the reader, to convey your own ideas and, where possible, to find the necessary foundation and support for your ideas.

While also the analysis of the contextual, semantic and lexicogrammatically features of the speeches, we can see language use that is ostensibly persuasive but inherently self-glorifying, presenting the speakers as good leaders who were sent „by the Almighty Himself“ to redeem the people from „chaos“, „deterioration“, „insecurity“, „corruption“, and lead them to better conditions. Other past administrators were presented as villains who institutionalized the contentious social vices. These representations are regarded by the present study as mere distortion of facts, as positive “self” and negative “other”

presentations. The language is aimed at the manufacture of consent (hegemony) while dangling the issues which represent the yearnings of the people as bait in (Ezeifeka, C. (2012)).

While previous studies have examined derogatory language in political speeches (Indriana & Muttaqin, 2019), media discourse (Gilpatric, 2006), and news representation (Wodak, 2015), there remains a notable gap in the exploration of derogation strategies in animated films targeted at younger audiences. Most research tends to focus on explicit forms of power discourse or real-life political communication, often overlooking the subtler ideological messages embedded in family-friendly media. Furthermore, few studies combine van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach with Zollner's functional model of derogation in a single analytical framework. Although Petruska (2012) addresses the representation of "bad guys" in media, the emotional and identity-forming dimensions of derogatory speech within fictional narratives remain underexplored. This gap highlights the need for further inquiry into how language in children's media both reflects and constructs societal norms, particularly regarding redemption, labeling, and perceived deviance.

Unlike earlier works that focus largely on adult political discourse or overtly violent media, this research uncovers how even humor-driven, family-oriented content can subtly reinforce social stereotypes through language. The study also highlights the psychological dimensions of derogation, analyzing how repeated exposure to stigmatizing labels affects both character self-perception and audience interpretation. By

examining specific utterances and linking them to their social and ideological implications, this research sheds light on how marginalized identities are linguistically constructed and contested. Importantly, it also invites a broader conversation about media literacy, encouraging viewers and content creators alike to critically evaluate how seemingly harmless language in entertainment can carry deep societal impact.

The findings of this research clarify the specific derogation strategies applied in *The Bad Guys* movie by identifying the discursive moves and functions embedded in the characters' language. Through detailed analysis using van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (2006) and Zollner's classification of derogation functions (in Degaf, 2016), the study demonstrates how characters such as Wolf, Snake, and Marmalade use derogatory expressions to either reinforce their villainous identities or resist societal labeling. Strategies such as actor description, implication, metaphor, and irony are shown to contribute not only to the construction of the "bad guy" image but also to the characters' internal conflicts when confronted with societal prejudice. By linking these strategies to their discursive functions such as ridicule, accusation, or victimization the study reveals how derogatory language contributes to the social construction of identity within the film's narrative (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Moreover, this research clarifies how repeated use of stigmatizing language (e.g., "Big Bad Wolf," "trash," or "criminal") affects audience perception by reinforcing stereotypes and shaping implicit biases. As Fairclough (2013) emphasizes, media discourse plays a crucial role in naturalizing dominant ideologies, and derogatory

portrayals can normalize discriminatory attitudes. Although the use of such strategies is not unique to this film and appears widely in other media (Gilpatric, 2006; Petruska, 2012), *The Bad Guys* offers a particularly accessible example of how these strategies function even within family-oriented content. Thus, the findings underscore the importance of critical awareness among media creators and audiences regarding the language and imagery used to depict villainous or marginalized characters. By exposing these mechanisms, this study contributes to broader conversations on representation, identity, and the ideological role of discourse in media (van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2011).

The findings of this research paper clarify the derogation strategy applied in *The Bad Guys* movie. The study offers insightful analysis of how "bad guys" are portrayed in media and how that influences viewers' impressions. The researcher found that *The Bad Guys* uses derogatory language and stereotypes to portray its characters negatively. Through van Dijk's and Zollner's frameworks, it was revealed that such language reinforces social bias and may influence viewers' attitudes by normalizing judgment and exclusion, even within humorous, family-friendly storytelling. It is noteworthy that the movie's derogation approach is not original and can be seen in many other kinds of media too. This study emphasizes, nevertheless, the need of media creators being aware of the language and images they employ to portray bad characters.

#### A. Research question

Based on the background of the study, the researcher question is:

1. What are derogatory words reflected in the discursive moves of *The Bad Guys* animated movie?
2. How are the function of derogation strategy in *The Bad Guys* animated movie?

#### B. Significance

This research is expected to make some contribution in terms of theoretical and practical significance. This research can be beneficial to enrich the understanding of the study about discursive moves, especially in derogation strategy. Practically, this research is expected to give information and knowledge in terms of analysing the derogation strategy throughout the text, utterances that appear in the movie. Regarding the research, this investigation put much attention concerning on discursive representation appearing in *the bad guys* animated movie.

#### C. Limitation

This study is limited to analyzing derogation strategies found specifically in the dialogue of *The Bad Guys* movie. It focuses only on spoken interactions between characters and does not examine non-verbal cues, visual symbolism, or audience reception. Furthermore, the scope is confined to exploring the functions of derogatory language as classified by Zollner (in Degaf, 2016), without extending into other forms of discursive strategy beyond those outlined by van Dijk's socio-cognitive model. the findings are based solely on the selected film and may not be generalizable to other media texts. As such, this



research offers a focused but narrow exploration of how derogation strategies operate within the specific narrative and linguistic context of the movie.

#### D. Definition of key terms

1. Discursive move: linguistic moves language users use to influence or control readers' minds. Represented in news in the way that different, possibly opposed opinions, beliefs, interests of different ideologically conflicted groups are hidden beneath ideological representations of social events. Such representations are often spelled along "Us" versus "Them" dimension, in which speaker of one group has a tendency to illustrate them and their group in positive terms and other groups in negative terms
2. The bad guys: an animation movie was produced in 2022 it is a story of a criminal group of anthropomorphic animals who, upon being caught, pretend to attempt to reform themselves as model citizens, only for their leader to find himself genuinely drawn to changing his ways for good as a new villain has his own plans.
3. derogation strategy: the act of talking about or treating someone in a way that shows you do not respect him, her, or it.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Building on the foundation established in Chapter I, this chapter provides a theoretical framework to support the analysis of derogation strategies in *The Bad Guys* movie. The previous chapter highlighted the significance of language in constructing identity and reinforcing societal labels through derogatory discourse. It also emphasized the role of media especially animated films in shaping how individuals and groups are perceived. To explore these concerns in greater depth, this chapter presents a review of the relevant literature, including the concept of van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, and Zollner's classification of derogation functions. By reviewing these key theories and previous studies, this chapter aims to offer the analytical tools needed to examine how derogatory language operates within the film's dialogue, and how it reflects broader power dynamics, ideological structures, and social stigmatization.

#### A. Discursive Move

The foundational premise of modern discourse analysis is that language is fundamentally a form of action. This perspective shifts the analytical lens from viewing language as a system of representation (a tool for describing the world) to viewing it as a system of performance (a tool for doing things in the world). The core unit of this performance is the **discursive move**, defined as any strategic choice a speaker makes within a linguistic exchange to achieve a specific communicative goal.

This concept is deeply rooted in the philosophy of language, specifically in **Speech Act Theory**, developed by J.L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969). Austin's central thesis was that in saying something, we are simultaneously *doing* something. He proposed that every utterance has three facets: the *locutionary act* (the literal, propositional meaning of the words), the *illocutionary act* (the speaker's intention or the act being performed, such as warning, promising, or questioning), and the *perlocutionary act* (the actual effect of the utterance on the hearer). Pragmatics, the sub-field of linguistics concerned with language in use, takes the illocutionary act as its central object of study, seeking to understand how speakers interpret and perform actions through language. Van Dijk's work highlights the interplay between discourse and society, emphasizing that discourse is not merely a passive reflection of reality but an active participant in shaping social attitudes and ideologies (Haryatmoko, 2016). He argues that discourse is a powerful tool for both reflecting and influencing social practices, including those related to power, prejudice, and inequality.

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as a linguistic approach, builds directly on this action-oriented view. Scholars like Norman Fairclough (2010) and Teun A. van Dijk (2008) see the analysis of discursive moves as the key to understanding how language connects to its social context. For them, every linguistic choice from a single word to a complex syntactic structure is a move that positions the speaker, the hearer, and the topic within a particular social and ideological framework. CDA's unique contribution is its explicit focus on connecting these micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level social

dynamics of power and inequality. Thus, a discursive move is not just a personal act but a socially significant one, contributing to the construction and maintenance of social realities.

## B. Approaches in Discursive Moves

Speakers have a vast repertoire of linguistic strategies at their disposal to perform discursive actions. These strategies are systematic ways of using the resources of language (lexicon, grammar, syntax) to achieve communicative goals. Teun A. van Dijk's (1995) discourse-analytic framework provides a useful typology for many of these moves, particularly those used to construct representations of "Us" and "Them." From a purely linguistic perspective, these can be understood as specific applications of lexical and grammatical systems.

1. **Lexicalization and Naming Strategies:** This refers to the choice of specific words (lexemes) to label or describe people, events, and concepts. The distinction between **denotation** (a word's literal, dictionary definition) and **connotation** (the cultural and emotional associations of a word) is crucial here. The choice between calling a group "protestors" (neutral denotation) or "rioters" (negative connotation) is a lexical move designed to frame them differently. This is one of the most powerful and direct ways to encode a particular viewpoint into a text.
2. **Predication and Attribution:** This involves the strategic use of adjectives, verbs, and adjectival clauses to attribute qualities to social actors. Describing a character as "brave" versus "reckless" uses different predications to evaluate the same action.

Analyzing who is described with positive attributes and who is described with negative ones reveals the underlying evaluative stance of the discourse.

3. Implication and Implicature: Speakers often communicate more than they explicitly say. The concept of **implicature**, developed by philosopher of language Paul Grice (1975), explains how hearers work out these implied meanings. A conversational implicature is an inference that arises from the assumption that the speaker is adhering to certain principles of cooperation. For example, if someone says, "Wolf is a great guy, but he has a short temper," they are implicating that his temper is a significant negative trait that qualifies his "greatness." This allows speakers to convey negative information without being held directly accountable for it.
4. Modality: This linguistic category refers to the way language is used to express degrees of certainty, probability, or obligation. The choice of modal verbs (e.g., *might*, *may*, *could*, *must*, *will*) and adverbs (e.g., *perhaps*, *certainly*, *allegedly*) is a key discursive move. Stating that an out-group "*might* be a threat" is different from stating that they "*are* a threat." Modality can be used to present opinions as facts (high modality) or to hedge and express uncertainty (low modality).
5. Transitivity: Drawing from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by M.A.K. Halliday (1985), transitivity analysis examines how processes are represented in clauses. It looks at who the **Actor** is (the doer of the action), what the **Process** is (the verb), and who or what is the **Goal** (the receiver of the action). The choice of active versus passive voice is a key transitivity move. For example, "The

police dispersed the crowd" (police are the Actor) presents a different reality than "The crowd was dispersed" (the Actor is hidden), which can obscure agency and responsibility. Analyzing these grammatical patterns reveals who is constructed as powerful and active versus who is constructed as passive and acted-upon.

### C. Derogation

Derogation is a discursive tactic meant to devalue a person or group. Van Dijk (1993) emphasizes how often social hierarchies are reinforced and power maintained by means of devaluation. By means of disparaging language, speakers or authors can discredit the social status or credibility of others, so claiming their own dominance. Derogation can manifest itself as negative generalizations, offensive language, and biased expressions among other ways. "Derogatory" is, as Hornby (2004) defines, a critical or insulting attitude directed toward others. Derogatory language might also feature accusation, exaggeration, or satire (Zollner in Degaf, 2016). In conversation, the words chosen and their connotations greatly affect how groups and people are seen. Negative other-presentation (Van Dijk, 2006) and positive self-presentation are intimately related underderstanding. These techniques help one present herself in a positive light while also denigrating others. Derogation of outgroups' shortcomings or perceived inferiority strengthens social divisions and the predominance of some groups.

Within the vast array of discursive moves, a significant subset is dedicated to the illocutionary act of belittling or devaluing a target. This act is derogation. From a linguistic perspective, derogation is not an emotion or a social structure itself, but a pragmatic function a specific communicative goal that is achieved through the strategic use of linguistic resources. It is an intentional, goal-oriented linguistic performance.

The most direct linguistic resource for performing derogation is **dysphemism**. As defined by linguists Keith Allan and Kate Burridge (2006) in their seminal work, dysphemism is the choice of a lexical item that is inherently offensive, harsh, or disparaging, in place of a neutral or positive alternative (a euphemism). While euphemism is language used as a "shield" to protect from unpleasantness (e.g., "collateral damage" for "civilian deaths"), dysphemism is language used as a "weapon" to attack a target.

The process of dysphemism relies on manipulating the **connotative meaning** of words. A word like "snake" has a neutral denotation (a legless reptile), but its connotations include deceit, treachery, and evil. Calling a person a "snake" is a dysphemistic move that transfers these negative connotations to the person, thereby performing the pragmatic act of derogation. Similarly, calling a group of people "trash," as occurs in *The Bad Guys*, uses a word whose semantic features include worthlessness and disposability to powerfully devalue the human targets. The study of dysphemism shows how the lexicon of a language is encoded with the potential for social evaluation, providing speakers with a ready-made toolkit for derogation

#### D. Derogation and Strategies

Discursive moves are techniques used by people or groups to assert control, influence, and power over others via conversation. Maintaining social hierarchies and building social identities depend on these actions, which are therefore fundamental. Van Dijk (2003) notes a spectrum of discursive techniques available for public opinion manipulation and ideological reinforcement. Some of the most common strategies include:

##### 1. Authority

Is a powerful rhetorical strategy that strengthens an argument by invoking the credibility of experts, institutions, or widely respected figures (Van Dijk, 2003). By appealing to authority, speakers or writers can bolster their claims and shield them from critique, as the audience is more likely to trust statements backed by authoritative sources. For example, political leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic frequently referenced the World Health Organization (WHO) to justify lockdowns and vaccine mandates, enhancing public compliance (Clarke, 2021). However, this strategy can also be misused, as seen in climate change debates where vested interests cite fringe experts to sow doubt (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004). Van Dijk (2003) emphasizes that such appeals are not neutral; they are ideologically loaded, as authority is invoked selectively to sustain dominance or marginalize dissenting voices. Thus, while authority lends legitimacy, critical discourse analysis reveals its role in reinforcing existing power structures under the guise of objective endorsement.



## 2. Categorization

Operates by assigns people or groups into predefined social categories—such as race, nationality, or political affiliation—to generalize traits or behaviors (Van Dijk, 1998). Usually, this process upholds group hierarchies and feeds stereotypes. For example, Muslims have been routinely labeled as threats in post-9/11 Western debate in media representations, so fueling Islamophobia (Poole, 2002). Such classification helps to simplify complicated identities into set labels with ideological weight. Van Dijk (1998) contends that since these discursive techniques justify discrimination and exclusion, they have social ramifications as well as linguistic ones. Poole's (2002) analysis of British newspapers revealed how Muslims were routinely labeled as "extremists" or "fanatics," which stoked public mistrust and policy discrimination and so stoked policy discrimination. Embedding these categories into common language helps to define limits between "us" and "them," so strengthening public opinion and supporting unequal treatment.

## 3. Comparison

Usually to improve the status of the ingroup by contrasting it with an outgroup, functions by negating the outgroup (Van Dijk, 2003). In nationalist rhetoric, this approach is central since nations stress their own moral superiority over supposed inferior others. Wodak (2015), for instance, looked at right-wing populist parties in Europe that juxtaposition native residents against immigrants, showing the former as law-abiding, hardworking person while the latter as welfare abusers or criminals. Though presented as factual, these analogues are ideologically driven to strengthen group identity and support exclusive policies. Van Dijk (

2003) notes that this contrasting framework feeds into social division and polarizing effect. Austrian politicians used such comparison in Wodak's (2015) research to support tougher immigration policies, so institutionalizing the created difference. Therefore, comparison functions as a discursive weapon to entrench privilege and marginalize others, even though it seems as only evaluation.

#### 4. Hyperbole

Exaggerates reality to intensify emotional impact and sway audiences (Van Dijk, 2003). Politicians and media frequently use hyperbole to provoke fear, anger, or urgency, especially during crises. For instance, Charteris-Black (2005) showed how British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher employed hyperbole by describing striking miners as "the enemy within," magnifying a labor dispute into a national threat. Such discourse exaggerates the stakes, framing opponents as existential dangers. Van Dijk (2003) notes that hyperbole is ideologically potent because it distorts facts while appearing emotionally compelling. In the media, sensational headlines like "immigrant flood" or "crime wave" amplify public anxiety even when statistical evidence is lacking (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). Thus, hyperbole operates not just as stylistic flair but as a tool to manipulate public sentiment, escalate conflicts, and justify extreme measures.

#### 5. Euphemism

Softens harsh realities through more palatable language, thereby sanitizing controversial or unpleasant truths (Van Dijk, 1998). By using more palatable language,

softens hard reality and sanitizes contentious or unpleasant truths (Van Dijk, 1998). Often used euphemism by governments and businesses to control public opinion is Chilton (2004) examined, for instance, how U.S. officials characterized civilian deaths in Iraq as "collateral damage," a phrase that minimizes emotional impact and distorts moral responsibility. This language approach hides the bloodshed and human cost involved, so justifying aggressive behavior as natural and logical. Van Dijk (1998) notes that euphemism hides power abuses and supports dominant narratives, so serving ideological purposes. Job losses in business settings are presented as "downsizing" or "rightsizing," which deflects focus from the suffering done to employees (Koller, 2005). Thus, euphemism is not neutral; it deliberately reinterpretes reality to serve institutional interests and quiet public indignation.

## 6. Implication

Works by implying negative meanings indirectly, so enabling speakers to avoid direct statements and still shape interpretation (Van Dijk, 1998). Political debate sometimes spreads presumptions free from responsibility using implication. For instance, Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) examined how Eastern European immigrants were subtly hinted to be linked to crime by Austrian politicians without stating it clear-cut. Such a dialogue fosters mistrust even while it supports reasonable deniability. Van Dijk (1998) stresses how implication uses audience shared stereotypes and assumptions to be ideologically powerful. Phrases like "concerns have been raised" or "some say" function in media as veiled accusations that avoid legal consequences but nonetheless harm reputations (Richardson, 2004). Implication thus softly supports prejudice and shapes social narratives without obvious conflict.

## 7. Presupposition

Embeds presumptions into speech and present them as agreed upon facts or common knowledge (Van Dijk, 1998). This method hides ideas under the surface of unambiguous statements so normalizing them. For example, Fowler (1991) demonstrated how news coverage presents demonstrations as disturbances, so undermining the validity of state authority. Presuming state narratives helps media dialogue fit dominant power systems. Van Dijk (1998) observes that such presumptions are difficult to challenge since they are accepted rather than freely expressed. In anti-immigration rhetoric, stating questions like "How can we deal with the immigrant problem?" assumes that immigration is intrinsically difficult (Wodak, 2015). Presupposition thus imposes ideological frames that gently shapes perspective and limits critical investigation.

## 8. Metaphor

Using familiar imagery, figurative language helps to frame difficult problems by gently guiding interpretation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; quoted in Van Dijk, 2003). Many times, political debate uses metaphors to simplify and persuade. Charteris-Black (2005), for example, demonstrated how frequently war metaphors were used in debates of cancer ("fighting cancer") and immigration ("floods" or "waves," so framing these problems as battles or natural disasters needing immediate response. Such analogies shape public perceptions and policy reactions; they are not neutral. Van Dijk (2003) underlines that metaphorical framing can impose specific values, such showing immigrants as invading forces, so supporting tight policies. Analogues such as "market meltdown" or "economic

storm" highlight events and shape investor behavior in financial news (White, 2003). Thus, metaphors serve as cognitive tools with ideological weight that help to shape society's conception and reaction to problems.

## 9. Polarization

Creates a "Us vs. Them" dichotomy, setting the outgroup as threatening and the ingroup as moral (Van Dijk, 2003). This tactic is fundamental in populist rhetoric, in which leaders present minorities or elites as enemies of the people. Wodak (2015), for instance, examined how right-wing European politicians polarized debate by depicting Muslims as incompatible with Western values. Such framing supports exclusion and social separation. Van Dijk (2003) points out that polarization fuels conflict and discrimination by reducing difficult reality into moral binaries. Trump's speeches in the United States sometimes polarize immigrants as criminals against American citizens as victims, so justifying strict immigration laws (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). By appealing to group fears and anxieties and marginalizing those labeled as "Them," this paradox drives support. Polarization then functions as a strong ideological force changing public opinion and policy.

## 10. Repetition

Repeats important terms, phrases, or stories until they become accepted, so strengthening ideas (Van Dijk, 1998). Political and media players employ repetition to ingrain concepts into public consciousness. For example, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008) discovered that the word "illegal" was consistently linked by British newspapers with immigrants, so strengthening negative preconceptions over time. Such repetition creates links that help to make discriminating frames seem logical and accurate. Van Dijk (1998) underlines how repetition embeds dominant ideas in daily conversation so preserving them. Terms like "freedom" and "terrorism" are used often in war propaganda to defend military operations (Chilton, 2004). This saturation of language limits different interpretations and shapes public knowledge. Thus, repetition not only informs but also shapes public opinion to progressively line it with hegemonic interests.

## 11. Disclaimer

Combines a contradictory negative assertion with an apparently denied prejudice (Van Dijk, 1992). This rhetorical device lets speakers reject charges while yet conveying biased opinions. For example, Billig (1988) observed that British politicians would frequently begin anti-immigrant remarks with disclaimers like "I'm not racist, but..." then make negative comments. Such disclaimers protect speakers from moral censure and show agreement with biased opinions. Van Dijk (1992) argues that this strategy is basic in ordinary racism, in which speakers negotiate social conventions against overt discrimination while retaining discriminating beliefs. Media lines like "We welcome refugees, but they must

respect our culture" also embed exclusion inside apparently friendly language (Wodak, 2015). Therefore, disclaimer serves as a discursive shield allowing prejudice even while it stifles criticism.

## 12. Evidentiality

Refers to making assertions as factual or generally accepted even if they are personal or debatable (Van Dijk, 1998). By hiding their ideological roots, this approach gives remarks power and objectivity. Wodak (2015) for example looked at how right-wing European politicians claimed that "everyone knows immigrants abuse welfare," so perpetuating a stereotype as common knowledge. Such clear evidential framing positions the claim as already settled, so discouraging discussion. Van Dijk (1998) underlines how clearly evidentiality helps to justify discriminating ideas under the cover of facts. Though based on selective evidence, terms like "experts agree" or "studies show" are routinely used in media to support claims (Clarke, 2021). By using public confidence in empirical data and so marginalizing other points of view, this discursive strategy shapes public opinion. Therefore, evidentiality helps to sustain dominant narratives and shapes knowledge hierarchies.

## 13. Lexical Choice / Labeling

Making assertions as factual or generally accepted even if they are personal or debatable (Van Dijk, 1998). By hiding their ideological roots, this approach gives remarks power and objectivity. Wodak (2015) for example looked at how right-wing European politicians claimed that "everyone knows immigrants abuse welfare," so perpetuating a

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#### 14. Number Game / Statistics

Even in limited application, uses quantitative data to create an illusion of objectivity and legitimacy (Van Dijk, 1998). Politicians and media regularly cite data to support assertions and shape public opinion. For instance, Van Leeuwen (2008) demonstrated how, in spite of contradicting more general data, crime statistics are selectively highlighted to show immigrants as disproportionately criminal. This deliberate numerical manipulation hides ideological motives under a surface of neutrality. Van Dijk (1998) points out that numbers have rhetorical weight, which gives comments appearing factual and incontestable credibility. In arguments about immigration, inflated numbers like "millions flooding in" feed anxiety and support tight policies (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). Such selective quantification creates social issues and supports governmental intervention. Thus, under the cover of empirical rigor, the number game serves as a discursive instrument supporting dominant ideas.



## 15. Vagueness

Uses vague language to avoid responsibility or commitment, so allowing speakers freedom and reasonable deniability (Van Dijk, 2003). Especially when talking about controversial topics, political debate sometimes finds great flourish in ambiguity. For instance, Blas Arroyo (2008) looked at how Spanish politicians, when discussing immigrants, avoided direct accusations while yet implying responsibility by using vague terms like "some groups" or "certain people". This strategy helps politicians appeal to big numbers without alienating specific constituencies. Van Dijk (2003) emphasizes how ambiguity serves ideological goals by distributing responsibility and maintaining ideological coherence devoid of clarity. In corporate settings, claims such as "challenges in the market" conceal actual causes including unethical behavior or layoffs (Koller, 2005). Vagueness thus serves as a shield, shielding great artists from criticism and softly guiding audience interpretation.

## 16. Topos (Commonplaces)

Argues for claims and behavior using common sense, reason, or shared cultural values (Wodak, 2001; cited in Van Dijk, 2003). This method arranges debate inside known, accepted conventions such that ideological claims seem reasonable. Wodak (2015), for example, showed how Austrian politicians argued against immigration using the topos of "burden," so suggesting that the government cannot afford to help immigrants. Underlying exclusive goals are hidden by this appeal to common sense economics. Van Dijk (2003) stresses how topoi structure arguments in ways that appeal to audience beliefs, so supporting accepted ideas. Within environmental debate, the topos of "jobs vs. Environment" presents

control as a threat to employment, so favoring economic growth over environmental issues (Dryzek, 2005). Invoking such commonplaces enables public approval for specific policies to help marginalize other points of view.

#### 17. Victimization

Presents oneself or one's group as unfairly treated or oppressed, so acquiring moral authority and defying criticism (Van Dijk, 2003). This strategy is typical in populist speech when elites present themselves as victims of conspiracies or hostile forces. Wodak (2015), for example, looked at how right-wing politicians portrayed native people as victims of immigrant crime and cultural degradation, so motivating support for nationalistic policies. Van Dijk (2003) notes that victimizing generates a moral high ground from which to attack competitors and avoid responsibility. In U.S. politics, Bonilla-Silva (2018) showed how white resentment stories frame affirmative action and diversity policies as reverse discrimination, so positioning whites as victims. Such speech reverses power relations, so justifying exclusionary actions under the pretense of self-defense. Thus, victimizing functions as a strong ideological weapon that under covers of justice reorders society hierarchies.

#### 18. Denial

Often in defense of reputation or against charges, clearly rejects responsibility, guilt, or negative connotations (Van Dijk, 1992). This kind of approach brings plenty of political scandals and institutional crises. Van Dijk (1992) for example looked at how politicians

accused of racism employed denial by declaring, "I am not racist," while still supporting laws that discriminate. Denial helps one to keep ideological positions while deflecting moral criticism. In business speech, oil companies have framed spills as events beyond their control and denied accountability for environmental harm (Boiral, 2016). Such denials hide systematic responsibility but preserve corporate credibility. Denying is not only defensive, according to Van Dijk (1992), but also actively reconstructs social reality by erasing proof of damage or injustice, so preserving dominance. Denial thus preserves power structures even as it seems to follow rules of responsibility.

#### 19. Irony and Sarcasm

Use indirect or mocking language to ridicule rivals and discredit different points of view without direct confrontation (Van Dijk, 1998). This approach lets speakers voice criticism without sacrificing reasonable deniability. Blas Arroyo (2008), for instance, discovered that sarcasm was frequently used in Spanish political debates to denigrate rivals using lines like "Oh sure, they care about the people now," which denigrates opponent while dodging direct accusation. Irony and sarcasm, Van Dijk (1998) points out, are ideologically charged since they produce in-groups of people who "get the joke" and out-groups targeted by them. Irony is used in media by satirical shows like *The Daily Show* to expose political corruption, so influencing public opinion and claiming entertainment value (Baym, 2005). This dual purpose makes irony a flexible instrument in communication, able to question authority or support prejudice depending on the situation. Thus, sarcasm and irony act as rhetorical weapons controlling opposition and so strengthening group identities. Among

other things, these techniques help to express anger, criticism, satire, or blame, so contributing to the function of negation in language (Zollner in Degaf, 2016). Particularly the polarization approach is essential in how social inequalities are justified and discriminatory ideas are maintained by means of derogation.

#### E. Function of Derogation

From a linguistic and pragmatic viewpoint, the functions of derogation relate to the communicative goals a speaker aims to achieve within a specific discourse context. These functions are about managing social relations, positioning the self and others, and controlling the narrative through language. Derogation performs several important functions in discourse, particularly in reinforcing social hierarchies and expressing ideological positions. As noted by Zollner (in Degaf, 2016), derogatory language may serve to insult, criticize, blame, reject, or ridicule others, often to assert dominance or dismiss opposing viewpoints. In media, such language shapes how certain characters or groups are perceived, especially when repeated across contexts. Here are the functions of derogation:

##### 1. Express Anger or Irritation

Derogatory Derogatory language gives speakers a direct outlet for their emotional states, so helping them to express anger or irritation (Zollner in Degaf, 2016). Common in public discussion as well as daily dialogue is this inclination. Richardson and Kilburn (2016) for instance examined how frequently political debates react to policy frustration with emotionally charged disparaging language. Such language is used by media personalities and politicians to channel public resentment toward out-groups, so supporting occasionally

strong policy decisions. Comparably, in digital communication, Cheng et al. (2017) discovered that, especially when debating divisive subjects like immigration or economic inequality, online users use disparaging words in comment sections as a kind of venting. This verbal hostility not only expresses personal irritation but also helps to establish group identities grounded on shared issues. Zollner (in Degaf, 2016) claims that while negative speech helps people control emotional stress, it also normalizes hostility in communication. Denying anger thus serves two purposes: it releases tension and increases in-group solidarity against alleged threats.

## 2. Criticize or Accuse

Derogatory remarks are often used to accuse or criticize others of wrongdoing, derogatory comments help to establish the speaker as morally better (Zollner in Degaf, 2016). Clearly this discursive approach is present in political rhetoric and media framing. Wodak (2015) looked at right-wing populist rhetoric in Europe, for example, where denigration was used to accuse political elites and immigrants of compromising national values. Such charges help the speaker to strengthen his position by demeaning rivals. In social movements, disparaging language also helps to expose claimed injustices. Though this often causes reaction for being "divisive," Bonilla-Silva (2018) pointed out how activists might use sharp, accusatory language to challenge systemic racism. Derogation in accusations increases the emotional weight of criticism, so enhancing its impact and memory value. But as Van Dijk (2003) underlines, this can intensify conflict by polarizing debate and solidifying divisions.

Therefore, even if disparaging comments help to draw attention to apparent wrongs, they also run the danger of sustaining cycles of hostility and social fragmentation.

### 3. Satirize

Satirical discourse often relies on derogation to mock or ridicule individuals and groups, spotlighting their perceived flaws in a socially palatable way. Satire's use of derogation functions both as entertainment and political critique. Baym (2005) discussed how *The Daily Show* employs satire to expose hypocrisy and corruption in politics, using ridicule to challenge dominant narratives. By exaggerating flaws and failures, satire engages audiences emotionally while encouraging critical reflection. However, as Van Dijk (1998) notes, derogatory satire can also reinforce stereotypes when directed at marginalized groups. In some contexts, satire walks a fine line between subversion and reinforcement of prejudice. For example, Lockyer and Pickering (2008) examined British comedy shows that used ethnic stereotypes for humor, arguing that while intended as satire, such portrayals often perpetuate negative perceptions. Thus, while satirical derogation serves to critique power structures, it must be analyzed critically for its potential to either dismantle or sustain social hierarchies.

### 4. Intensify Insults

Derogatory language intensifies insults by amplifying their emotional and social impact (Zollner in Degaf, 2016). This strategy is commonly observed in conflict talk, whether in personal arguments, political debates, or online interactions. Jay (2009) studied the psychology of swearing and found that insults embedded with derogatory terms elicit

stronger reactions because they attack identity markers like race, gender, or nationality. In political campaigns, derogation intensifies attacks on opponents, as seen in the 2016 U.S. presidential race where candidates used labels like "crooked" and "deplorable" to discredit each other (Ott, 2017). Such intensified insults escalate tensions and polarize audiences. In digital spaces, Cheng et al. (2017) observed that derogatory intensifiers spread rapidly, fueling toxic communication and diminishing the quality of public discourse. While Zollner (in Degaf, 2016) highlights that intensifying insults through derogation satisfies emotional impulses, Van Dijk (2003) warns that repeated exposure to such language normalizes aggression and deepens societal divides. Thus, intensifying insults through derogation serves both expressive and destructive functions in discourse. By understanding the functions of derogation, researcher can gain insight into how power dynamics and social inequalities are reproduced through language in various forms of media and discourse.

#### F. The Bad guys animated movie (2022)

"The Bad Guys" is an action-comedy from DreamWorks Animation that tells the story of a notorious crew of animal outlaws: the charming pickpocket Mr. Wolf, the cynical safecracker Mr. Snake, the sharp-tongued hacker Ms. Tarantula, the muscle and master-of-disguise Mr. Shark, and the hot-tempered brawler Mr. Piranha. After a lifetime of successful heists has made them the most wanted villains in the world, their luck finally runs out and they are caught. To avoid a prison sentence, the gang must pull off their most challenging con yet: convincing everyone they have gone good. Under the tutelage of the seemingly benevolent guinea pig Professor Marmalade, the "Bad Guys" pretend to embrace a life of

good deeds. However, the plan gets complicated when Mr. Wolf, the crew's leader, genuinely discovers the joy of being liked, creating a rift with his friends and forcing him to question his entire identity. Blending fast-paced heist action with a unique, stylized animation that feels like a moving comic book, the film is a funny and heartwarming story about stereotypes, friendship, and the choice between who the world thinks you are and who you want to be.



## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter, the researcher will describe the methodology employed to carry out this study. The study's methodology consists of research design, data source, data collecting, and data analysis. As a result, readers will comprehend how this study was conducted.

#### A. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research method because it allows for an in-depth exploration of language, meaning, and context—elements essential for analyzing how derogatory discourse shape's identity and social perception. The qualitative approach is appropriate as it focuses on interpreting the dialogue and social interactions within *The Bad Guys* movie rather than measuring numerical data. To guide the analysis, the researcher uses van Dijk's socio-cognitive theory to identify discursive moves and strategies, which helps uncover the ideological structures behind the language used. Zollner's framework is also employed to analyze the specific functions of derogatory language, such as criticism, accusation, and satire, which are central to the film's narrative.

#### B. Data Source

The data source of this study consists of utterances containing derogatory language found within the dialogues of *The Bad Guys* (2022), an animated film produced by DreamWorks Animation and distributed by Universal Pictures. The primary linguistic data are the verbal expressions spoken lines by characters that reflect derogatory strategies, including insults, accusations, irony, and labeling. These utterances are analyzed in terms of

their structure, function, and social implications within context. The film, with a runtime of approximately 100 minutes, was accessed via Netflix for repeated viewing to ensure accurate transcription and contextual understanding. In addition to the film's script-based utterances, secondary data in the form of scholarly literature including textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, and online academic resources are used to support the theoretical framework and interpretation. These linguistic sources provide the foundation for examining how language construct's identity and power relations through derogation in the movie's narrative discourse.

#### C. Data Collection

The data were collected by closely watching *The Bad Guys* movie multiple times to identify and transcribe utterances containing derogatory language. Each dialogue was carefully selected based on its relevance to van Dijk's discursive strategies and Zollner's derogation functions. The researcher also reviewed supporting literature from scholarly books, journals, and online sources to contextualize and strengthen the analysis.

#### D. Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the theoretical framework of van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Zollner's classification of derogation functions. Each selected utterance from the film was examined to identify discursive strategies such as actor description, implication, metaphor, and irony, as proposed by van Dijk. These were then analyzed for their communicative function such as mocking, accusing, or rejecting based on

Zollner's model. This framework allowed the researcher to interpret how derogatory language construct's identity and reinforces social hierarchies within the narrative.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provide a detailed explanation of the derogation strategy that used by the character in the bad Guys in the movie. Where tells the story of a criminal group of anthropomorphized, once-captured animals who claim to try to reform themselves into model citizens as the group member is wolf, shark, snake, piranha, and tarantula they are struggle to finding their position in society that keep marginalized and stigmatized as a villain group. the researcher examines the data using theories from van Dijk and Zoellner regarding discursive moves. The researcher here identifying the derogation strategy that used in the movie to answer the research question of this study.

#### A. Derogation strategy used in “The Bad guys” movie

“The Bad Guys” is animated movie that produced by DreamWorks that extensively examines how a social prejudice work toward a criminal group that try to change their social image. The main themes of the movie are how this criminal group want to change their way but society treats and judges this criminal group unfairly regardless of their behaviour, race, and past. The movie address issue related to the public opinion toward a criminal group, that treated unequally in social ladder as people stereotype them as a criminal group. The stereotype that addressed to the group really portrayed how the social works in real life. The presentation of social norms and the prejudice, objectified and isolation that commonly people do toward individual or group of people.

After identifying the derogation strategy that used then researcher go deeper into the function of each derogation that used in the movie those function that are expressing anger or irritation, criticizing, satire, accusation or blame, the delivery of information, insult or taunting, showing distaste, exaggeration, and showing evidence. In the movie character using this derogation strategy to change the flow of movie. By using this derogation strategy, they can do things like manipulate their social interpretation. As in early dialogue of Wolf to the audience by saying that his character is a big bad wolf as character introduction. He mentioned that his character is really bounded with his other representation in another story. The representation of a scary monster as he mentioned, as in datum 1

#### Datum 1

##### Scene:

Wolf introduces himself as "The Big Bad Wolf," acknowledging his stereotype as a villain in many stories. He points out to Snake, emphasizing that he is perceived as the villain in every narrative.

##### Dialogue:

Wolf: "I'm **the Big Bad Wolf**. I'm not supposed to be good."

In the opening scene of The Bad Guys, the character Wolf introduces himself with the line, "I'm **the Big Bad Wolf**. I'm not supposed to be good." This statement exemplifies van Dijk's derogation strategy of actor description, where an individual is described in a way that activates stereotypical or socially constructed roles. Here, Wolf labels himself using the culturally entrenched figure of "The Big Bad Wolf," a symbol commonly associated with villainy, danger, and deception. By adopting this label, he is not merely narrating his identity he is reflecting how society has long positioned him. The actor description serves as a mirror

of societal perception, where Wolf's identity has been shaped and defined by how others view him, not necessarily by his own actions. Through this discourse, the film exposes the power of language in framing identities and predisposing audiences to make assumptions based on existing stereotypes.

The function of this derogatory actor description is to deliver information, concerning Wolf's self-perception as well as the social labels that define him. Saying "I'm The Big Bad Wolf," Wolf does more than only expose a fictional cliché he has come across, absorbing the label society has given him. The audience is presented in this line a critical internal conflict: the conflict between his real self and the one society accepts as him. The deliberate but quiet delivery highlights his resigned acceptance of his given responsibility. This moment is essential for realizing how negatively expressed language reflects self-perception. Wolf first doesn't object to the label; rather, he uses it to create expectations, suggesting that society will always see him as the villain regardless of his actions. This type of internalized stereotype shows how strongly ingrained society labels can be, impacting not only how others treat people but also how those people view themselves. This is used in the movie to remark on the more general social problem of typecasting people depending on group identification or appearance.

## Datum 2

### Scene:

Wolf opens up to Diane about the group's inner struggles, describing them as “a deep well of anger and self-loathing.” Diane dismisses his vulnerability with short, indifferent responses.

### Dialogue:

Wolf: "We're not good... we're just a **deep well of anger and self-loathing.**"

Diane: "Wow. You really sold me on the whole redemption thing."

In this scene, Wolf uses the derogation strategy of implication when he opens up to Diane about his and the group's struggles. He says, "It's like, deep down, there's a part of you that wants to be good... but it's buried... under a deep, deep well of anger and self-loathing." Wolf does not openly call himself bad, Wolf does not openly label himself as poor, but his words imply that their self-worth has been severely damaged by negative society impressions. Mentioning anger and self-loathing, he suggests that the way society defines them as enemies determines the emotions. Internalizing these labels causes emotional scars rather than only bad behavior in the group. Though subtle, the negation emphasizes how deeply psychological wounds are created by society rejection. Wolf uses implication to show an internal struggle whereby a history of external negativity overcomes a will to be good. This scene directly relates to how negative labels in society are not only outside assessments but also can affect the self-perception of people continuously excluded.

The function here is to express frustration and show distaste. Wolf's comment "a deep, deep well of anger and self-loathing" more suggests a protest against the unfair treatment he and his team go through than it does of self-pity. Being reduced to clichés without

opportunity for atonement irritates him. Diane's answer, "Yeah, well, we all have bad days," also captures society's tendency to minimize or ignore the emotional toll of labeling by expressing disgust and contempt of Wolf's vulnerability. Apart from distancing Wolf, Diane's indifference feeds his belief that society does not give people like him any importance. Rather than showing compassion. The function exposes the two emotional loads that stigmatized people carry: the loneliness resulting from trying to express their difficulties and the suffering of society rejection. This emphasizes how negative language shapes the internal conflict and perceived outsider status of the individuals

### Datum 3

#### Scene:

Wolf proposes an experiment to prove that the group can change, suggesting they be given a second chance through a public gala. Diane remains skeptical while Marmalade supports the idea.

#### Dialogue:

Wolf: "Let's try something crazy. Let's try to be good."

Wolf (sarcastically): **"I mean, we're trash, right? So why not try recycling?"**

In this scene, Wolf employs metaphor and sarcasm when proposing that the group can change. He says, quite forcefully, "We're more than just scary villains... we're... trash!" Here, "trash" represents their perspective as worthless and irredeemable—that of how society sees them. The sarcasm underlines the ridiculousness and harshness of that view. Wolf emphasizes their image to reflect the worst presumptions of society about them, so highlighting that they can be changed even if "trash" can be. Wolf mocks those judgments by reflecting the absorption of society's negative labels using both sarcasm and metaphor.



This approach lets him handle the group's poor reputation without overtly criticizing society, so transforming the negativity into a dramatic, ironic statement. Wolf gently questions their permanency and reveals how profoundly these negative preconceptions have entered their self-image through this language.

The function of this derogation is exaggeration and argumentation. Wolf exaggerates society's perspective by calling themselves "trash," so strengthening the case for the possibility of atonement. Seen in "I mean, who could be worse than us?" his sarcastic tone contends that real change is possible if even the worst—as judged by society—can change. Emphasizing the unfairness of society labels and so inspiring hope for change, this approach appeals to both reason and passion. His speech is strategic: he presents improvement as not only feasible but also strong by stressing their bad image. This goal relates to the research question since it highlights how the people embrace but also reject society labels. Wolf's sarcastic exaggeration exposes an inner conflict between embracing labels and striving for self-definition, so demonstrating that although they are aware of society's view, they are not quite ready to accept it.

#### Datum 4

##### Scene:

Wolf sarcastically comments on their situation, lamenting how society views them as hopeless criminals, and he sarcastically mentions Mother Teresa as someone who could help them change.

##### Dialogue:

Wolf: "Sure. Maybe Mother Teresa can help us. Oh wait—**she's dead.**"

Wolf uses irony and hyperbole when commenting on their perceived hopelessness. "Maybe Mother Teresa can come down and work her magic on us," he says cynically. This ironic comment underlines how challenging change is as observed in society. The hyperbolic calling to Mother Teresa, a symbol of pure goodness, emphasizes how unreachable society's expectations are for persons just like her. Wolf's use of irony points to a critique of these illogical society expectations rather than clearly declaring that they are unfair. Wolf uses comedy and exaggeration to expose how strongly anchored and almost ridiculous the preconceptions against them are. Irony shields Wolf from the pain of social rejection by letting him parodies the ridiculousness of being judged as irredeemable while yet stressing the damage done to their self-image.

The function of this derogation is satire and criticism. Wolf questions the strict moral standards society demands on labeled "bad guys" by ironically proposing Mother Teresa's intervention. His questions, "What's next?" We join a monastery? mocks the notion that their criminal image could be erased by only saint-like metamorphosis. Wolf reveals the hypocrisy in expecting perfect behavior from people society already finds flawed beyond repair by means of humor. His criticism is a sharp, funny mirror of frustration, not open rebellion. This

feature relates to the research question since it shows that negative society attitudes produce internalized hopelessness about redemption rather than only labeling individuals outside. Wolf's sarcastic remarks expose a longing to change as well as a sour knowledge that society might never really embrace them even if they do.

#### Datum 5

##### Scene:

Marmalade mocks Wolf, boasting about how he outsmarted him in every trap, highlighting Wolf's perceived failures.

##### Dialogue:

Marmalade: "You really thought you could **outfox a fox**?"

In Datum 5, the derogation strategy employed by Marmalade is self-glorification and comparison. Marmalade tells Wolf, "Outsmarted you at every turn, Big Bad Wolf!" during a confrontation. This says less of Wolf's aptitudes and more of Marmalade's intelligence and superiority. By purposefully being harsh, Marmalade presents himself as the wiser, more capable character while casting Wolf as inept and stupid. Emphasizing Wolf's mistakes, Marmalade uses self-glorification frames to present not only successful but also dominant. Rooted in reinforcing society labels of who is "good" and "bad," the comparison strategy manipulates perceptions to raise one's status while devaluating another's. Marmalade makes sure Wolf stays caught under the weight of self-doubt and outside criticism.

The function of this derogation strategy is insulting and taunting. "You're just a loser in a cheap suit," Marmalade's taunting "attacks Wolf's competency and self-worth directly." His remarks are meant not only to prove his own superiority but also to denigrate and

demoralize Wolf, so supporting the belief that Wolf is unable of actual change. Marmalade enhances the story that some people are permanently "bad" and unworthy of atonement by denigrating Wolf. This function closely relates to the research question since it shows how negative language is used to support society labels from both outside sources and personal rivals, so strengthening both external and internal labels. Wolf's self-perception is tested not only by society but also by direct, nasty reinforcement from others. Insults like Marmalade's make it more difficult for Wolf to reject absorbing the label of a failure, so illustrating how negative language shapes identity from several directions.

#### Datum 6

##### Scene:

The TV presenter cynically declares that change is impossible and that stereotypes should always be upheld, reinforcing the divide between "good" and "bad."

##### Dialogue:

TV Presenter: "Once a bad guy, always a bad guy!"

The TV presenter in Datum 6 uses norm expression and presupposition when cynically stating, " Once a bad guy, always a bad guy!" This statement expresses a societal norm that change is impossible for those labeled negatively. Bad characters are assumed to be intrinsically bad, thus no effort will change that impression. The language suggests that rather than biased presumptions, stereotypes are natural facts. Declaring it as a fact, the speaker supports the strict binary of "good" against "bad," so excluding any possibility for development or atonement. This approach reveals how media and authority figures help to

entrench negative labels, so making it more difficult for people like Wolf and his team to escape from their social roles.

The function of this derogation strategy is criticism and satire. The film questions society's inclination to have strict, merciless opinions about people's capacity for change by means of the presenter's cynical attitude. Though delivered gravely within the story world, "Once bad, always bad" uses its exaggerated fatalism as satire to expose the cruelty and ridiculousness of such deterministic ideas. The function relates to the research question since it emphasizes how outside voices—such as those of media personalities—reiterate negative labels, so ensnaring people in pre-defined identities. Through challenging the lack of belief in change, the scene illustrates how negative language not only labels but also limits people's possibilities, so profoundly influencing their view of themselves.

Datum 7

Scene:

After the heist goes wrong and the group is criticized, Wolf vents about how the world sees them.

Dialogue:

Wolf: "We saved a kitten, and they screamed! SCREAMED!"

Wolf's speech after the failed heist uses the strategy of generalization. Frustrated, he says, "No matter what we do, they'll always see us as the bad guys!" This sweeping statement reflects an exaggerated view of society's judgment. Wolf captures the futility he feels in trying to alter their image by generalizing. According to his remarks, everyone in society has a monolithic, negative perspective of them and ignores any deeds of virtue they could carry

out. Generalization lets Wolf depict the scope of their struggle in a few words, so rendering society as consistently biased. This approach reveals that negative opinions are so strong and pervasive that opposition seems almost useless, profoundly affecting the self-perception of the individuals.

The function of this strategy is exaggeration and criticizing society. Wolf's annoyed comment accentuates the negative aspects of society, so underlining how strongly prejudice against the "bad guys" runs. His example—rescue of a kitten only to be yelled at—showcases how deeply ingrained labels eclipse positive deeds. Targeting to show how imprisoned and helpless the group feels, the exaggeration is emotional rather than factual. This directly relates to the research question since it demonstrates how negative society attitudes not only affect external reputation but also shape internal beliefs on hopelessness and unchangeability. Wolf's irritation emphasizes the psychological effect of society labeling and catches the emotional tiredness of battling preconceptions.

Datum 8

Scene:

When Wolf tries to rally the team again after the betrayal.

Dialogue:

Wolf: "You think they're ever going to see us as anything but criminals? **We're bad guys. That's all we'll ever be to them.**"

In the scene where Wolf tries to rally the team after the betrayal, he uses the strategy of polarization. Declaring, "It's us against the world!" he divides society into two camps: the mistreated public and the misinterpreted "bad guys". Polarization emphasizes outside

hostility and helps to reduce a complex social relationship into a "us against them" narrative, so strengthening group solidarity. Wolf's remarks reveal society as always hostile, which drives the team to get closer to one another and see almost impossible fight as almost inevitable. This method catches the way the characters embrace their outsider identity created by constant social rejection.

Polarization serves in this moment as victimizing and controlling tool. Wolf's remark, "No one's ever gonna give us a chance unless we take it," helps the team to rekindle their drive and so presents them as victims of social injustice. Wolf inspires group loyalty and unity by using their victimhood, so turning collective suffering into a shared objective. But it also supports a negative self-perception whereby acceptance seems unreachable. This role directly relates to the research question since it shows how individuals absorb negative society labels and view themselves as constant outsiders who have to fight against an environment that has already assessed them.

## B. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that *The Bad Guys* movie utilizes various derogation strategies that shape how characters internalize social labels. Using van Dijk's discursive strategies such as actor description, implication, and polarization characters like Wolf display self-awareness of the negative stereotypes projected onto them. This aligns with Wodak and Meyer's (2009) argument that discourse plays a central role in reproducing social exclusion. However, unlike political contexts where derogation is used primarily to attack opponents, as observed in Indriana and Muttaqin's (2019) study on Donald Trump's speeches, the

characters in *The Bad Guys* often turn derogation inward. This internalization creates identity crises rather than merely serving a manipulative purpose. Therefore, the film offers a unique case where derogation is used not only to reflect societal views but to explore characters' struggles with acceptance and self-worth. This emotional depth distinguishes the film from other studies that focus mainly on power consolidation through derogatory language.

The function of derogation in this study also reflects a broader societal tendency to stigmatize and exclude. Through Zollner's framework, the study finds that derogation in the movie serves various functions ranging from criticism and mockery to resignation and protest. This is consistent with Fairclough's (2013) view that language reproduces power relations through normalized expressions. However, what sets this study apart is its application to animated, family-friendly media a genre often overlooked in CDA. While previous research, such as Gilpatric's (2006) analysis of violent female characters, has shown how media reinforces stereotypes through aggressive roles, *The Bad Guys* reveals that even comedic, light-hearted content can carry deep ideological messages. These findings challenge the assumption that children's media is neutral or harmless, and suggest that derogatory discourse in such films can subtly influence viewers' perceptions of morality, identity, and social worth. Thus, the study emphasizes the need for critical engagement with language in all forms of media, not just overtly political ones.

In conclusion, the derogatory language in *The Bad Guys* serves not only as humor but as a reflection of the emotional and psychological impact of societal labels. Through various strategies, the film demonstrates how stereotypes shape self-perception, creating an internal



conflict between acceptance and resistance. The characters struggle to escape these labels, but their awareness of societal judgment influences every attempt at change. This analysis highlights the complex relationship between derogatory discourse, identity, and the hope for transformation.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This is the last chapter of the research. This chapter provides the results of how derogation is used in *The Bad Guys* animated movie. The conclusion is drawn based the result on the discussion and analysis on previous chapter. In addition, suggestion will also be given for future researchers in order to provide better improvement for future research.

#### A. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze the use of derogatory language in *The Bad Guys* movie and to uncover how such language construct identity and reflects societal labels. Through a qualitative approach using van Dijk's discursive strategies and Zollner's functions of derogation, the analysis revealed that derogation in the film serves both to reinforce and to challenge societal stereotypes. Characters such as Wolf internalize derogatory labels like "Big Bad Wolf" and "trash," illustrating van Dijk's strategies of actor description, implication, and polarization. These linguistic strategies frame characters as both victims and agents within the ideological structure of discourse, reflecting the complex role language plays in shaping identity.

In addition, the study found that derogatory expressions in the film perform various functions such as delivering information, expressing frustration, criticizing, mocking, and signaling resignation according to Zollner's model. These functions show how derogation can manifest in subtle, emotional, and rhetorical forms that go beyond mere insult. Compared to previous studies that focus on political discourse, such as Indriana and Muttaqin (2019), which highlight how derogation serves to gain power or discredit opponents, this study presents a different perspective. It demonstrates how derogation in animated media can influence both character self-perception and audience understanding of morality and social identity.

In conclusion, the use of derogatory language in *The Bad Guys* is not random or purely humorous. It reflects deeper social issues related to labeling, exclusion, and the struggle for acceptance. This study highlights the importance of critically analyzing language in all media forms including those aimed at younger audiences because such discourse plays a crucial role in normalizing ideologies and reinforcing or resisting stereotypes. By uncovering how language operates within fictional narratives, this research contributes to the broader field of Critical Discourse Analysis and opens space for further studies on media, identity, and linguistic power.

From finishing this thesis, the researcher developed a strong awareness of how language reflects and supports social power dynamics, especially by means of derogatory strategies in media. By applying van Dijk's and Zollner's frameworks, the researcher was able to observe how discourse shapes identity and reinforces stereotypes particularly against

underprivileged groups as a tool for exposing latent ideas in ordinary communication as well as for linguistic assessment. As the characters' fight for acceptance and atonement reveals, the researcher also discovered how profoundly society labels shape both external view and internal self-concept. Furthermore, the study process improved academic writing, critical thinking, and methodical media text analysis ability. This thesis finally supported the need of critically analyzing popular culture and demonstrated that even animated movies have important social messages deserving of academic attention.

#### B. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that future researchers explore the role of derogation strategies in other forms of media beyond animation, such as live-action films, television series, or digital platforms, to better understand how language influence's identity construction and social perception. Researchers may also examine audience reception to determine how viewers particularly children and adolescents interpret derogatory language in media. Educators and parents are encouraged to approach animated content critically, recognizing that even family-friendly films may carry ideological messages about morality, labeling, and exclusion. Media creators should be more mindful of how characters are linguistically portrayed, especially when those portrayals reinforce stereotypes or stigmatize certain groups. Finally, applying Critical Discourse Analysis in combination with other frameworks such as multimodal analysis can provide deeper insight into how both language and visuals work together to shape narratives of power, identity, and social judgment.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE



Arrafi Nur Fadhilah was born on April 4, 2000. He graduated from SMAN 2 Kebumen. While he started to enter the collage in 2019, at Department Of English Literature, Faculty Humanities, Islamic State University Of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang . In the course of collage life, he joined as member of Enterpreneurship division english literature student association 2020. While in spare time he spend time to enjoy with reading news, swimming, and also sometime watcing movies.

APPENDIX				
Datum	Scene Description	Dialogue	Strategy Used	Function / Note
1	Wolf introduces himself to the audience.	Wolf: "I'm the Big Bad Wolf. I'm not supposed to be good."	Actor Description	Reflects internalization of societal labels.
2	Wolf opens up to Diane about emotional pain.	Wolf: "We're not good... we're just a deep well of anger and self-loathing." Diane: "Wow. You really sold me on the whole redemption thing."	Implication	Reveals internalized judgment and emotional burden.
3	Wolf suggests the group should try to change.	Wolf: "Let's try something crazy. Let's try to be good." Wolf: "I mean, we're trash, right? So why not try recycling?"	Sarcasm & Metaphor	Challenges negative identity through exaggeration.
4	Wolf mocks society's unrealistic expectations.	Wolf: "Sure. Maybe Mother Teresa can help us. Oh wait—she's dead."	Irony & Hyperbole	Critiques societal standards using satire.
5	Marmalade humiliates Wolf after betrayal.	Marmalade: "You really thought you could outfox a fox?"	Comparison & Self-glorification	Intended to insult and assert dominance.
6	A TV anchor reinforces a societal stereotype.	TV Presenter: "Once a bad guy, always a bad guy!"	Norm Expression & Presupposition	Reinforces fixed public perceptions.
7	Group's good deed is rejected by the public.	Wolf: "We saved a kitten, and they screamed! SCREAMED!"	Generalization & Exaggeration	Shows frustration toward social bias.

APPENDIX				
Datum	Scene Description	Dialogue	Strategy Used	Function / Note
8	Wolf tries to motivate his team after betrayal.	Wolf: “You think they’re ever going to see us as anything but criminals? We’re bad guys. That’s all we’ll ever be to them.”	Polarization & Victimization	Expresses emotional exhaustion and identity crisis.